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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 000677

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTIONS LEAD-UP: RULING PARTY DOMINATES  
CANDIDATE LISTS THROUGH FLAWED REGISTRATION PROCESS

REF: A. CAIRO 389  
[1](#)B. CAIRO 448  
[1](#)C. CAIRO 495

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs  
William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: We do not expect any surprises from Egypt's April 8 local elections. Due to the government's widespread blocking of oppositionists from registering as candidates, only a total of 962 opposition candidates, including just 20 from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), have made it onto the ballot. Only 1.8 percent of the 52,000 nationwide races will be contested by any of Egypt's opposition forces. MB leaders have called the registration process a "farce," and staged large protests on April 1 in eight governorates, which resulted in the detention of some 294 MB members. To date, the government has not complied with numerous court rulings ordering approximately 6,000 MB candidates to be put on the ballot. While the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) is facing some internal dissension due to its restrictive internal candidate selection, it will undoubtedly win a sweeping "victory" on election day. On April 8, at least 13,640 USG-supported Egyptian election monitors will be monitoring the polling nationwide, as will nine teams from Embassy Cairo. End summary

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BALLOTS FIXED SO RULING PARTY FACES  
NEGLECTIBLE OPPOSITION  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Following the troubled candidate registration period, during which hundreds of opposition candidates were reportedly blocked, physically or bureaucratically, from registering (ref C), the GOE undertook a lengthy review of the aspiring candidates who had managed to register, and knocked several hundred opposition candidates off of the ballot. The NDP registered 52,000 candidates - one for each of the races. Overall, 962 opposition candidates made it onto the ballot, meaning that out of the 52,000 races nationwide, only 1.8 percent will be contested by any of Egypt's opposition forces.

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to the leadership of each party, opposition candidates are as follows: the liberal Al Wafd party has 507 candidates on the ballot (out of 600 who registered); the socialist Tagammu party has 415 candidates; the liberal Democratic Front Party has 18 candidates (out of 60 who registered); the liberal Ghad Party (Ayman Nour's wing) has no candidates on the ballot (out of 27 who registered); and the MB has 20 candidates (out of 498 who registered, out of the 10,000 candidates the MB originally planned to put forward). Oppositionists, particularly the MB, are furious about what they view as the government's

"obscene abuse" of democratic processes. Leading MB member Abdoul Monem Aboul Fotouh, asked about the elections April 2 on Al Jazeera, said "What 'elections'? These are not anything approximating elections. This is a total farce." It is unclear at this point how many independent candidates are running. NDP secretary-general Safwat El Sherif has publicly commented that "only" in 30-percent of the races will NDP candidates be running unopposed. We believe this to be an exaggerated figure, given that Egyptian oppositionists will be running in only 1.8 percent of the races.

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GOVERNMENT IGNORING COURT RULINGS THAT  
ORDER MB CANDIDATES ONTO THE BALLOT  
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¶4. (C) Frustrated by the registration fiasco, the MB filed hundreds of lawsuits in an attempt to get its candidates on the ballot. According to press reports and leading MB member Essam El Erian, numerous court rulings in several provinces have been issued in the past several days, ordering that a combined total of 6,000 MB-affiliated candidates be put on the ballot. The government has not complied with any of the court rulings. Subsequently, the provincial Administrative courts in six out of Egypt's twenty-six provinces ruled that the local elections should be halted, until the blocked opposition candidates were put onto the ballot. Legally speaking, no elections should be held in the provinces of Kafr El Sheikh, Qalubiyah, Beheira, Menofiyah, Gharbiyah, or Damietta. As of April 3, there was no indication that the government would comply with these rulings, and elections in these provinces are expected to be held on April 8.

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WIDESPREAD MB PROTESTS RESULT IN MORE MASS DETENTIONS  
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¶5. (SBU) On April 1, the MB organized demonstrations in eight provinces, protesting the exclusion of MB candidates. Reportedly, thousands of MB members participated in the demonstrations (estimates range from 3,000-5,000 protesters in Sharkiyah province, 1,500-5,000 in Gharbiyah province and protests numbering in the low thousands and hundreds). According to press reports, the police used rubber bullets, tear gas, and batons to disperse them. Subsequently, on April 1, 2, and 3, approximately 294 MB members were detained in security sweeps in the provinces of Beheira, Gharbiya, Qalubiyah, and Alexandria, on charges of "resisting the authorities" after participating in the April 1 demonstrations. The total number of MB members detained over the past several weeks in local elections-related arrests is approximately 750-1000.

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NDP FACING INTERNAL DISSENSION  
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¶6. (SBU) Numerous NDP members are also displeased with the registration process, and a 1,240 NDP members, including 12 parliamentarians, have reportedly resigned from the party in the past two weeks as a result of internal disputes about candidate selection. One of the MP's (representing the Delta City of Minya) who resigned told us that the problems are due to resentment of the manipulation of the candidate selection process by NDP Secretary for Organization (and key Gamal Mubarak confidante) Ahmed Ezz. An incumbent NDP local council member in Alexandria commented to us that there is a "major crisis" in the NDP stemming from the generational rift within the party, with Ezz viewed as trying to "squeeze out" the old guard.

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ELECTION MONITORING  
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17. (SBU) On April 8, at least 13,640 Egyptian election monitors will be monitoring the polling nationwide. USAID grants to the Egyptian Association for Supporting Democratic Development, the El Nakib Center for Training and Democracy Support, and the Ibn Khaldun Center will support 12,700 of the monitors. A MEPI-grant supports 940 monitors organized by the Maat Center. The Embassy will also send out USG teams to nine governorates to observe balloting.

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CRUSHING NDP "VICTORY" ASSURED  
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18. (C) Given the government's manipulation of the registration process, it is obvious, even before a single ballot is cast, that the NDP will win a sweeping "victory" on April 8. Such obvious rigging of the vote beforehand offers little incentive to the already apathetic Egyptian public, renowned for low voter turnout in past elections, to come out and vote this time. Oppositionists of all stripes - liberal, Islamist, and socialist - are bitter and angry about the process to date, and are concerned that a worrying precedent, particularly vis-a-vis flawed candidate registration processes, has been set for the next parliamentary elections in 2010. Overall, the government's blocking nearly all MB candidates from the ballot gives the impression that the ruling party, seeking to avoid humiliating MB gains as in the 2005 parliamentary elections, is scared to compete against the Islamist organization.

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